

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 IO-13 SSM-03 HA-05 /098 W
-----111218 250955Z /11

P R 250750Z MAY 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6236
INFO /AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 1037
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BAGHDAD 1103

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LE, FR
SUBJECT: IRAQ AND LEBANON

REF: BAGHDAD 1086 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FRENCH ARE MAKING UNIFIL'S CASE TO
IRAQIS, WHO SHOW SOME SIGNS OF MODERATING THEIR POSITION IN
SOUTHERN LEBANON. IRAQ'S ENMITY TOWARD SYRIA AND SUPPORT OF
REJECTION FRONT ARE MAJOR FACTORS BEHIND ITS UNCOOPERATIVE
ACTIVITY. END SUMMARY.

2. FRENCH AMBASSADOR MORIZET TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT HIS
MEETING WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN TWO DAYS AGO (REFTEL) WAS AS
PRODUCTIVE AS COULD BE EXPECTED UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
MORIZET SAID THAT SOME TWO WEEKS BEFORE HE HAD SECURED A
STATEMENT FROM HUSSEIN TO THE EFFECT THAT IRAQ WAS NOT
OPPOSED TO UNIFIL IN PRINCIPLE AND WOULD NOT INTERFERE
WITH ITS OPERATIONS AS SUCH. GOI DID HAVE SERIOUS DOUBTS AS
TO EFFECTIVENESS WITH WHICH UN FORCES COULD CARRY OUT THEIR
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MANDATE, HOWEVER, IN FACE OF WHAT WAS DESCRIBED AS ISRAELI
INTRANSIGENCE. MUCH OF WHAT UNIFIL WAS DOING APPEARED TO
ASSIST ISRAELIS MORE THAN LEBANESE/ARABS.

3. THE MEETING THIS WEEK WAS FOR THE PURPOSE OF
CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE AND PRESENTING A LETTER
FROM PM BARRE WHICH LAID OUT THE FRENCH POSITION

ON THE MIDDLE EAST IN GENERAL AND UNIFIL IN PARTICULAR. MORIZET SAID THE STRESS WAS ON THE ROLE OF THE LATTER AS AN ABSOLUTELY NEUTRAL FORCE WITH THE SIMPLE OBJECTIVE OF CARRYING OUT A MANDATE FROM THE UN. HUSSEIN REPORTEDLY REPEATED THAT IRAQ HAS LITTLE DIFFICULTY WITH THE MANDATE AS GIVEN, BUT IS NOT AT ALL SURE THAT UNIFIL IS DOING MUCH MORE THAN SERVING ZIONIST/IMPERIALIST OBJECTIVES. HE AGAIN STATED THAT IRAQ WOULD NOT OPPOSE OR INTERFERE WITH UNIFIL, DESPITE ITS MISGIVINGS.

4. HUSSEIN CHOSE AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF IRAQI CONCERNS THAT FACT THAT ISRAELIS HAD NOT (AT THE TIME OF THE MEETING) SET A DATE FOR THEIR FINAL WITHDRAWAL. HE SAID THAT EVEN IF A DATE WERE TO EVENTUALLY BE FIXED, IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE UNDER TERMS AND CONDITIONS THE ISRAELIS WOULD SET THEMSELVES, AND WHICH EVERYONE ELSE WOULD BE FORCED TO ACCEPT.

5. MORIZET EVIDENTALLY IS SATISFIED THAT HE HAS OBTAINED AS STRONG A COMMITMENT AS IS POSSIBLE. IN HIS VIEW, GOI LEADERSHIP HAS EASED ITS STAND SOMEWHAT ON LEBANON, BUT REMAINS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE EVENTUAL EFFECTS THAT UNIFIL MAY HAVE ON IRAQI OBJECTIVES IN THE AREA. IT IS WORTH NOTING, CONFIDENTIAL

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IN THIS CONNECTION, THAT LOCAL PRESS HAS AS YET CARRIED NO WORD OF ISRAELI ANNOUNCEMENT OF A WITHDRAWAL DATE.

6. LEBANESE AMBASSADOR SHAMMAS, WHO RETURNED FROM BEIRUT ON THE 22ND, JOINED US FOR PART OF CONVERSATION REPORTED ABOVE. HE CONCURRED IN MORIZET'S ASSESSMENT IN GENERAL TERMS AND SAID LATER THAT HE IS MEETING WITH HUSSEIN ON THE 24TH IN ORDER TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION FROM LEBANESE POINT OF VIEW.

7. SHAMMAS SAID HE INTENDS TO PLACE MAJOR STRESS ON THE FACT THAT IRAQIS ARE HURTING LEBANON FAR MORE THAN SYRIA, WHICH HE SEES AS THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF IRAQI POLICY IN HIS COUNTRY. THIS, HE SAID, IS NOT IN THE GOI'S OWN LONG-TERM INTERESTS, AND HE HOPES TO MAKE THIS CLEAR TO HUSSEIN.

8. ACCORDING TO SHAMMAS, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT IRAQ HAS BEGUN TO WITHDRAW ITS OWN FORCES FROM LEBANON, DESPITE ASSURANCES THAT IT WOULD BE DONE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT HE HAD URGED GOL NOT REPEAT NOT TO PASS ON INFORMATION TO INTERESTED PARTIES, ESPECIALLY

THE U.S., CONCERNING ALLEGED PRESENCE OF "UP TO 500"
CUBAN TROOPS IN LEBANON UNTIL THE STORY WAS CAREFULLY
CHECKED FOR VALIDITY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BAGHDAD 1103

9. WE HAVE A REPORT FROM ANOTHER ARAB DIPLOMAT THAT
PRESENCE OF IRAQI "VOLUNTEERS" IN LEBANON HAS LED TO
RENEWED FRICTION BETWEEN IRAQ AND YASSER ARAFAT.
ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT ARAFAT, IN MOVE TO SHOW UNIFIL
HE WASSCOOPERATING, ARRESTED SOME IRAQI VOLUNTEERS WHO
WERE IN A POSITION THREATENING TO UNIFIL TROOPS. IT
IS NOTEWORTHY THAT ARAFAT BYPASSED BAGHDAD ON HIS MOST
RECENT TOUR OF THIS AREA. BY CONTRAST, SAMIR GHOSHA
OF PALESZINIAN REJECTION FRONT WAS FAVORABLY INTERVIEWED
BY IRAQI GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER ON MAY 22. GHOSHA WARNED
OF FRICTION BETWEEN PALESTINIAN FORCES AND UNIFIL IF
LATTER TRIED TO OBSTRUCT ACTIVITIES OF "PALESTINIAN
AND LEBANESE RESISTANCE TO ZIONIST INVADERS." GHOSHA
BLAMED DIFFERENCES WITHIN PALESTINIAN RANKS ON STANDS
TAKEN BY PLO LEADERSHIP.

10. COMMENT: GOI APPEARS TO BE UNDECIDED AS TO POLICIES
IT WILL FOLLOW IN LEBANON. REGIME MAY WELL BE ENGAGED
IN AREASSESSMENT OF THE ENTIRE SITUATION AND GIVES THE
IMPRESSION OF BEING PREPARED TO ADOPT, ALL THINGS BEING
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RELATIVE, A SOFTER LINE, ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL ON
SCHEDULE MAY HAVE A FAORABLE IMPACT ON
IRAQI ASSESSMENT OF UNIFIL'S CREDIBILITY AS A NEUTRAL
PEACEKEEPING FORCE. PECK

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